

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04
NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SY-05
EAE-00 H-01 DODE-00 L-03 /053 W
-----251255Z 036392 /43

O R 250850Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1720

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0664

CONCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, PINT, KS, US

SUBJECT: NDP LEADER PLANS U.S. VISIT AND EXPOUNDS MODERATE
APPROACH TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: NDP LEADER INQUIRES AS TO BEST TIME FOR WASHINGTON
VISIT, EXPRESSES COMMON KOREAN CONCERNS ON TROOP ISSUE
AND VICE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO TOKYO, AND EXPOUNDS ON HIS
MIDDLE OF THE ROAD POLICY WHICH HE HOPES WILL GRADUALLY
REDRESS POWER IMBALANCE IN OPPOSITION FAVOR. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION JANUARY 25 OPPOSITION NDP
LEADER YI CHOL-SUNG ASKED MY ADVICE ON WHEN HE MIGHT MAKE
FACTFINDING TRIP TO WASHINGTON WHERE HE WOULD HOPE AMONG
OTHERS TO TALK TO SECRETARY, UNDER SECRETARY HABIB, WHITE
HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR BRZEZINSKI, AND CONGRESSIONAL
FIGURES INCLUDING HOUSE SPEAKER O'NEILL, CONGRESSMAN
ZABLOCKI, AND SENATOR HUMPHREY. YI'S OWN PREFERENCE IS
TO GO FAIRLY SOON, IN FEBRUARY IF POSSIBLE; IN ANY EVENT
HE WOULD LIKE TO GO BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL
SESSION WHICH HE ANTICIPATES COULD BE AS EARLY AS APRIL.
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I DISCOURAGED HIM FROM MAKING TRIP TOO SOON, POINTING OUT
GREAT PRESSURES IN WASHINGTON AT THIS TIME AND SUGGESTING
THAT LATE MARCH OR APRIL MIGHT BE BETTER TIME. I MADE NO
COMMITMENTS, BUT SAID I WOULD INQUIRE ABOUT FEASIBILITY
OF APPOINTMENTS HE HAD REQUESTED. YI INDICATED THAT HE
WOULD BE VISITING JAPAN SHORTLY BUT THAT THIS
REPRESENTED NO CONSTRAINT ON TIMING OF WASHINGTON VISIT.

HE SAID HE ALSO HOPED TO HAVE INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT PAK AFTER HIS RETURN FROM THE UNITED STATES.

2. YI WENT ON DURING LUNCH TO RAISE FAMILIAR KOREAN CONCERNS REGARDING TROOP REDUCTIONS AND VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE'S OMISSION OF SEOUL STOPOVER ON WAY TO JAPAN; HE ALSO FEARED NORTH KOREAN PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO MOSCOW MIGHT LEABZB STRENGTHENED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR PYONGYANG. I RESPONDED TO HIS POINTS IN REASSURING TONES; (SEE SEPTTEL FOR MY COMMENTS) REGARDING PURPOSES OF MONDALE VISIT).

3. DURINGOULUNCH YI EXPANDED ON HIS OWN PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSES, AND PLANS INDICATING THAT HE WOULD GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE JANUARY 26 OUTLINING HIS VIEWS AS OPPOSITION LEADER IN SOME DETAIL. HIS MAIN POINT CONTINUES TO BE THAT HIS MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD COURSE IS ONLY EFFICACIOUS WAY TO BUILD COUNTER BALANCE TO PAK'S EXCESSIVE POWER AND PRESIDENT'S OVER-EMPHASIS ON NORTHERN THREAT AND NEED TO RESTRICT HUMAN RIGHTS. HE VOICED CONFIDENCE THAT GREAT MAJORITY NOT ONLY WITHIN OPPOSITION NDP BUT EVEN RELIGIOUS AND OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS FAVORED SUCH A PRAGMATIC APPROACH AND THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO MARSHALL THEIR SUPPORT. WHILE EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR KIM TAE-JUNG AND OTHER MORE RADICAL OPPOSITIONISTS HE REJECTED THEIR CONFRONTATIONAL STYLE, COMMENTING THAT KIM TAE-JUNG WAS REVOLUTIONARY; OPEN CONFRONTATION BETWEEN HARD-LINE OPPOSITIONISTS AND PRESIDENT ROLLED BACK AND FORTH LIKE THE TIDES BUT ACHIEVED NOTHING. WITHOUT INDICATING SOURCE OR FIRMNESS OF HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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INFORMATION, HE SAID HE HAD INDICATIONS PRESIDENT MIGHT IN FACT EASE UP ON SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEAR FUTURE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED POSSIBILITY THAT THIS MIGHT LEAD TO RENEWED OPEN CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT AND STUDENTS AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS BUT REAFFIRMED HIS CONFIDENCE IN BEING ABLE TO CONTAIN "EXTREMISTS."

4. COMMENTING ON HIS OWN OPPOSITION PARTY PROBLEMS, YI SAID HE WAS MAKING PROGRESS IN APPOINTING PARTY OFFICIALS AND SECURING HIS POSITION AMONG THE PARTY'S COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP. SAVING HIS SHARPEST WORDS FOR HIS PRIME OPPOSITION CHALLENGER, KIM YONG-SAM, YI WAS CONFIDENT THAT KIM COULD NOT OBTAIN REQUISITE NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS TO FORCE CALL FOR PARTY CONVENTION IN SEPTEMBER WHERE KIM WOULD HKOPE TO REGAIN LEADERSHIP LOST LAST SUMMER.

5. COMMENT: YI MAKES A COHERENT CASE FOR GRADUALISM, BUT IS REPUTED IN MANY QUARTERS IN AND OUTSIDE OF HIS

OWN PARTY TO HAVE SOLD OUT TO ROKG, AND THIS UNDERMINES
STRENGTH OF HIS LEADERSHIP. WHETHER HE CAN IN FACT ACHIEVE
ANYTHING TO REDRESS DOMESTIC POWER IMBALANCE OR CHANNEL
HARDLINERS ALONG PATHS HE CHARTS IN EVENT PRESIDENT PAK
EASES UP RESTRICTIONS REMAINS HIGHLY PROBLEMATICAL.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE TO RESPOND
TO YI'S QUERY ABOUT WASHINGTON VISIT.
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Message Attributes

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TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, PINT, KS, US, NDP, (YI CHOL-SUNG)
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